

Willy A. Kirkeby

# ENGLISH SWAHILI DICTIONARY

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Na mwandishi yuleyule

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# Preface

The origin of this dictionary project dates from 1995, when I returned after an interval of 23 years to Tanzania, where I had worked as education officer at Mkwawa Secondary School for three years. I found that most people's knowledge of English had greatly deteriorated. Up to then, the only dictionary available to them was the Oxford Standard English-Swahili Dictionary dating from 1939. As all higher education in the country is based on teaching aids in English, there was obviously a great need for a new, up-to-date dictionary. I saw a clear example of the difficulties encountered by students when I visited a hospital in Dar es Salaam. The nurses complained that they had no possibility of looking up the numerous medical terms they came across in the textbooks.

The idea then came to me that I might use one of my more recent English-Norwegian dictionaries, written on a computer, as the basis of an English-Swahili dictionary. The Norwegian metalanguage would have to be turned into English, a task I would undertake myself as the rest of the work proceeded. In principle, there should be no great problems involved in substituting Swahili for the Norwegian text – I thought. However, the reality turned out to be different, as I began to realise during a two-month preliminary project in Dar es Salaam in 1997.

So, all honour and thanks to the person who after a short time became the very pivot of the project, Mary Mbelle, who is a well-known figure in Radio Tanzania and on CEN Television. Even during the trial period of the project in the autumn of 1997 it struck me that she was a highly qualified candidate. Without this encouragement in the opening phase I doubt whether I would have ventured to start the project.

Finding suitable candidates to work on the dictionary proved to be far more difficult than I had imagined in advance, and indeed only once since the Oxford Standard English-Swahili Dictionary was published in 1939, has there been an attempt at compiling an English-Swahili Dictionary: the TUKI English-Swahili Dictionary compiled and published by the Institute of Kiswahili Research in 1997. It should be mentioned that the Oxford Standard English-Swahili Dictionary has hitherto been reprinted 58 times in an unrevised edition.

By a pure stroke of luck, among those who replied to our advertisement, the well-known writer Adam Shafi expressed the desire to try his hand at dictionary compiling. With the

experience of a lifetime spent in many different countries, including a couple of years as a student in Germany, together with his command of the Zanzibari dialect, he became a valuable addition to the editorial staff.

Some months before the project was completed, we succeeded in recruiting Agatha Mathayo Nyenga. She is a teacher by profession and supplied us - and thereby the dictionary - with a number of useful words and expressions from the field of education. With her cheerfulness, drive and keenness at work, she soon became indispensable in this final decisive phase, when proofreading had to be intensified and working hours extended in order to meet the deadline for completion. So especial thanks to Agatha!

Towards the completion of the project, in the decisive phase when proofreading was about to begin, we were once more lucky. Khamisi Akida, the great Tanzanian expert on Swahili, joined the project as proofreader and consultant. His help was of inestimable value to us. During a long lifetime he has greatly contributed to extending people's knowledge of Swahili, including the publication of *Kamus ya Kiswahili Sanifu* (Dictionary of Standard Swahili).

A number of people have given us the benefit of their special knowledge. It would be impracticable to thank each one individually here. However, my good friend Vitalis Ephrem Minja deserves special mention for his help with computer terms and the computers themselves whenever there was a problem. I should also like to mention the former Mkwawa student Iddy Lujina of the Stanbic Bank, Dar es Salaam, on account of his help with banking terms.

Finally, my sincere thanks to Tove Strand, Director of NORAD, who, in the difficult initial phase, saw to it that the project got under way and acted resolutely when financial problems threatened to put a stop to further work.

Needless to say, it has been an interesting and in every way challenging two-and-a-half year period for the compilers and for myself.

It is with the greatest humility we present the result of our combined efforts.

Willy A. Kirkeby

# Utangulizi

Chanzo cha mradi huu wa kamusi ya Kiingereza-Kiswahili kilianzia mwaka 1995 niliporudi tena Tanzania, miaka 23 iliyopita, baada ya kumaliza kazi kama afisa elimu katika shule ya Sekondari ya Mkwawa, ambako nifaniki kazi kwa muda wa miaka mitatu. Niligundua baadaye kwamba kiwango cha lugha ya Kiingereza nchini Tanzania kilikwishashuka sana. Mpaka hapo, kamusi pekee ya Kiingereza-Kiswahili iliyokuwepo kwa matumizi ilikuwa "The Oxford Standard English-Swahili Dictionary" iliyochapishwa mwaka 1939. Kwa kuwa elimu ya juu nchini Tanzania hutumia vitabu vilivoandikwa kwa Kiingereza, kulikuwa na haja kubwa, bila shaka, ya kuandika kamusi mpya ambayo itakidhi mahitaji ya hivi sasa. Nilikutana na mifano halisi ya matatizo walijukwau wakikutana nayo wanafunzi, pale nilipotembelea moja ya hospitali za mjini Dar es Salaam. Wauguzi walilalamika kwamba hakuna uwezekano wa kuan-galia maana ya istilahi nyngi za utabibu ambazo hukutana nazo katika vitabu wanavyovisoma.

Hapo ndipo lilitonjia wazo kwamba nitumie moja ya kamusi zangu za hivi karibuni ya Kiingereza-Kinorway ambayo ilikuwa imeandikwa kwenye kompyuta. Maneno ya Kinorway ilibidi yatafsiriwa kwa Kiingereza, kazi ambayo ningelifanya mimi mwenyewe wakati kazi nyngine ikiende-lea. Kimsingi pasinzelikuwe na shida kubwa katika kubadili maneno ya Kinorway kuwa ya Kiswahili - hivyo ndivyo nilivyodhani. Hata hivyo mambo hayakuwa kama nilivoyadhania nilipoanza kubaini katika kipindi cha miezi miwili cha mradi wa majaribio mwaka uanze mjini Dar es Salaam 1997.

Kwa hiyo, heshima na shukrani zote zimwendee mtu ambaye baada ya muda mfupi tu amekuwa ndiye mhimili mkuu wa Mradi, naye ni Mary Mbelle, aliyekuwa maaruufu Radio Tanzania na kituo cha televisheni cha CEN. Hata wakati wa kipindi cha majaribio ya Mradi, mwezi Septemba 1997, niligundua kwamba Mary ni mtu mwenye sifa zote zinazofaa kwa kazi hii. Bila kutiwa moyo naye wakati ninaanza kazi hii, nina wasiwasi kama hata nisingelithubuto kuuanza Mradi.

Kupata watumishi wenye sifa zinazohitajiwa kwa shughuli ya kamusi hii ilikuwa shida kubwa kinyume na vile nilivyo-tajia mwanzoni na kwa kweli ni mara moja tu, tokea kuan-dikwe "The Oxford Standard English-Swahili Dictionary" mwaka 1939, imeandikwa kamusi nyngine ya Kiingereza-Kiswahili: "TUKI English-Swahili Dictionary" iliyandothia na kuchapishwa na Taasisi ya Uchunguzi ya Kiswahili" mwaka 1997. Lazima ielewewe kwamba "The Oxford Standard English-Swahili Dictionary" mpaka hiv sasa imechapishwa mara 58 bila ya kufanyiwa marekebisho yoyote.

Iliokea kwa bahati tu, kwa wale walioleta maombi yao kufuatia tangazo letu, kumpata mwandishi mashuhuri wa riwaya, Adam Shafi, aliyeyonesha nia ya kutaka kujaribu uwezo wake katika kazi ya uandishi wa kamusi. Akiwa na uzoefu katika maisha yake ya kuishi katika nchi mbalimbali, pamoa na miaka michache akiwa mwanafunzi nchini Ujeruman, pamoa na ustadi wake mkubwa wa lugha ya Kiswahili

chenye lahaja ya Kizanzibari, alitoa mchango mkubwa kwa wafanyakazi wahariri wa kamusi hii.

Miezi michache kabla Mradi haujakamilishwa, tulifanikiwa kumpata Agatha Mathayo Nyenga. Weledi wake ni mwali mu wa Kiswahili katika shule za sekondari. Yeye ametoo mchango mkubwa kwetu sisi na kwa kamusi hii kwa kutafsiri na kufanu maneno na misemo yenye maana kutoka kwenyen fani ya elimu.

Kwa uchangamfu wake, bidii na shauku ya kazi, kwa muda mfupi Agatha amekuwa wa manufaa sana katika awamu hii ngumu, ambapo uhariri ulipaswa kufanywa kwa umakini zaidi na muda wa kazi kuongezwa ili kuukamilisha Mradi wa kamusi kwa muda uliopangwa. Shukrani za dhati kwa Agatha!

Wakati tukiwa katika hatua za mwisho za kumaliza Mradi, kipindi muhimu kabisa cha shughuli hii, wakati tunataka kuanza kazi ya uhariri na kusahihisha, tulipata bahati nyngine kubwa. Mzee Khamisi Akida, mtalamu wa hali ya juu wa lugha ya Kiswahili nchini Tanzania, alijunga na Mradi kama msahihishaji na mshauri. Msada wake ume-kuwa na thamani kubwa sana kwetu. Katika shughuli zake za kila siku Hamisi Akida ametoo mchango mkubwa sana katika kuendeleza elimu ya lugha ya Kiswahili kwa watu mbalimbali, hiyo ikiwa pamoja na kushiriki na kutoa mchango mkubwa sana katika utunzi wa Kamusi ya Kiswahili Sanifu (Dictionary of Standard Swahili).

Watu wengi wametupa msada wao wa kitaalamu ambao tulihitaji sana katika kazi ya uandishi wa kamusi hii. Haitawezekana kuwashukuru wote mmoja mmoja. Hata hivyo, nitakuwa mtovu wa shukrani kama sikumtaja rafiki yangu mkubwa Vitalis Ephrem Minja kwa msada wake wa kutafsiri istilahi za kompyuta na pia utengenezaji wa kompyuta endapo zinakwua na dosari yoyote ile. Hali kadhalkika ninapenda kumtaja mwanafunzi wa zamani wa Mkwawa Sekondari, Iddy Lujina wa Benki ya Stanbic. Yeye ametoo mchango mkubwa sana kwa Mradi kwa kutafsiria istilahi za kibenki.

Mwisho ninatoa shukrani zangu za dhati kwa Tove Strand, Mkurugenzi wa Shirika la Maendeleo la Norway (NORAD), ambaye wakati wa kipindi cha kwanza ambacho kilikuwa kigumu, alifanya kila awezalo ili kuhakikisha kwamba Mradi unaendelea na alichukua hatua za kijasiri kabisa pale matatizo ya kifedha yalipokaribia kukwamisha kabisa Mradi.

Sina haja ya kusema kwamba kipindi cha miaka miwili na nusu cha mradi huu kilikuwa kipindi cha changamoto kubwa kwa waandishi wa kamusi hii na kwangu mimi binafsi vile-vile.

Kwa heshima na unyenyekevu tunawasilisha matokeo ya kazi yetu ya pamoja.

Willy Kirkey

# User's Guide

The critical and advanced students of English whose command of the language is so comprehensive that they use all-English dictionaries almost exclusively will find, hopefully, that this dictionary offers them substantially more than do the bilingual dictionaries hitherto published. In addition to the usual information concerning meaning and pronunciation, this group of users will require guidance as to the currency of words and expressions. It will often be the case that the word or expression one is looking up cannot be said to be the one most frequently used. In such cases, attention is drawn in this dictionary to the fact that other words and expressions may be just as applicable or even preferable. The suggested alternative is italicized and preceded by the equation sign. It is important to notice, however, that the absence of the equation sign indicates an explanation or definition (for example **institutionalize 2**). After brackets enclosing a new shade of meaning there will sometimes be a colon, followed by one or more examples in English with associated Swahili equivalents. This indicates that such connotations have validity in only a limited number of set expressions, as shown by the examples.

The hesitancy on the part of those who compile monolingual English dictionaries to mark a word as 'archaic' or 'literary' is reflected in the bilingual works from English into other languages, whether they are published in the UK or abroad. And it is precisely in such dictionaries that this shortcoming can lead to the choice of a wrong word or expression. A characteristic feature of this dictionary is the extensive use of labels, even where the choice is difficult and where considerations of convenience might indicate that they be omitted. Archaisms have largely been omitted, but where they occur they are clearly marked as such.

Among the innovations in this dictionary are the thorough coverage of life in tropical waters, and the inclusion of all animals, birds and trees indigenous to Africa.

Another feature is that Americanisms are included to a great extent. American pronunciation is shown where it differs greatly from the usual British pronunciation (e.g. **hostile**, **illustrative**, **inculcate**, **incursion**, **nomenclature**). But variants in British pronunciation are also shown when these occur frequently (see **despicable** and **formidable**, for example).

As regards phonetic notation, I have gone further than any other bilingual dictionary, in that information is given as to actual or possible shifts in stress when attributive. (See **unfair**, **underdone** and **short-sighted**, for example).

The dictionary itself contains only a selection of the most frequently occurring abbreviations. A fuller list will be found in an appendix at the end of the book.

If a hyphenated word, e.g. **absent-minded**, has to be divided, the hyphen is placed at the beginning of the next line to show that it is part of the word, e.g.  
**absent**  
**-minded**

(-ing) is used to show that in English the ing-form of the verb is used in the expression concerned, e.g. **gain by (-ing)** -pata kwa (ku...)

~ replaces the headword, e.g. **abdominal: ~ cavity**

Brackets () are used to indicate that the word or words enclosed in them may be included or left out of the translation, e.g. **that's about (the size of) it**.

A comma and brackets are also used to show the American form or spelling, e.g. **declare oneself in favour** (US: favor) of something. In such cases a comma before US always indicates that only the British-English word immediately before it is replaced.

In the English text, suggested alternatives are bracketed, italicized and preceded by an equation sign. In the vast majority of cases, the contents of the brackets can replace the word immediately preceding them. Where misunderstandings may easily arise, however, it will be seen that the whole, or a large part, of the preceding English text is repeated. The absence of an equation sign indicates an explanation or definition: **pediment** archit(low-pitched gable above door or window: kipa (vi-).

A colon after brackets enclosing an additional shade of meaning indicates that such connotations are valid in only a limited number of set phrases, as shown by the examples: **I. account... 10 (=importance): of little ~ -a umuhimu mdogo; of no ~ -sio na umuhimu;**

Both the British and American pronunciation of words is given. The translations give plural endings in Swahili, and these are shown in brackets (ma-, vi-, wa-). A simple dash in brackets indicates that the word is unchanged in the plural. In cases in which the plural is not immediately obvious, the plural form is given in brackets.